



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons 4-1 Inf. Public Affairs)

## Bulldoze!

**Staff Sgt. Jason Briglin, the reconnaissance noncommissioned officer for Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, bulldozes in front of the brigade's headquarters building at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Iraq. The Dragons arrived at the FOB in February and made renovation of the camp one of their top priorities.**

## A note to the troops from the general

Members of MNF-I:

I've been on the ground for about a month now and wanted to share some early thoughts with you.

First, and foremost, I want to note how impressed I have been by your professionalism, skill and determination. In my visits to units all over Iraq, I have repeatedly seen a true will to win and a sincere desire to help our Iraqi partners achieve success. These observations give me confidence that we and our Iraqi counterparts will be

able to improve the level of security for the Iraqi people - though I recognize that it won't be easy or without frustration and setbacks. You know as well as I do how challenging an endeavor this is.

Improving security for Iraq's population is, of course, the overriding objective of our strategy. Accomplishing this mission required carrying out complex military operation and convincing the Iraqi people that we will not just "clear" their neighborhoods of the enemy, we will also stay and

help "hold" the neighborhoods so that the "build" phase that many of their communities need to go forward. Helping ensure enduring security in Iraqi neighborhoods not only helps Iraqi officials make the most of the opportunity that we and our Iraqi counterparts will create, it also helps ensure that our Iraqi counterparts are fully ready to accept the eventual hand-off of

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# Vehicle maintenance keeps Apaches airborne

By 2nd Lt. Kasim Harton  
1st ACB

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Maintenance in the 1st Cavalry Division is an integral part of daily operations. Whether at home or abroad, maintenance is the "life blood" of the Army and is essential to the mission.

Soldiers of Company E, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, deployed to the Iraqi theater of operations during the fall of 2006. Upon arrival to Camp Taji, Iraq, the "Equalizers" immediately began maintenance operations.

"I believe ground maintenance is very important, because those helicopters aren't going to fly without fuel or ammo. Without mechanics, the [fuel] and ammo personnel wouldn't be able to accomplish their missions because the trucks simply would not be able to roll," said Lima, Ohio, native Sgt. John Rampe, a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic and team chief of on-schedule



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB Public Affairs)

**Pfc. Ben Lee, a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic for 4th Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB, works on a heavy expanded mobility tactical truck in the 4-227th motor pool at Camp Taji, Iraq.**

maintenance for the Equalizers.

"When we first got here, we were eager [to work] just for the simple fact that we'd been sitting in Kuwait ... we needed to get back to working on trucks and getting things done. The majority of us, mechanics, here enjoy doing our job," said Beaver Falls, Pa., native Spc. Sean Genzler, a light-wheeled vehicle mechan-

ic for Co. E.

The vehicles they maintain carry fuel and ammunition that are promptly uploaded onto 4-227th's Apache Longbow helicopters.

It is imperative that these ground vehicles stay fully mission capable in order to keep the aviators in the fight, said Rampe.

"A lot of times some faults or problems take several hours to repair or just to trouble shoot,"




Rampe said. "Without spending that kind of time on them, the truck could be down for two to three days or a week. Where as, if you spend an extra couple of hours on it, you may be able to accomplish that mission that evening."

"Any time a vehicle goes down it would be like a patient coming into the hospital with a major issue - basically, in our terms, it deadlines the vehicle. If you lose this truck, you've lost a piece of your mission," Rampe said.

"It's good to know that whatever little part you have, whether it's small or large, it has something to do with the whole picture. Because of what you did to a certain vehicle is the reason the helicopters are flying over every day," said Rampe.

"Outside the motor pool [camaraderie] continues on because we just about do everything together. It eases the feeling of being away from home because you've got people so close here - it's basically a family," said Rampe.



Iraq 3-Day Weather Report			
	Today	Tomorrow	Monday
High: 68 Low: 50	High: 66 Low: 46	High: 70 Low: 46	

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(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner 15th SB, PAO)

**Soldiers of the 1157th TC, 15th BTB, 15th SB stand in formation during a Mar 15 transfer of authority ceremony.**

## Down from towers; back to fuelers

**By Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner  
15th SB, Public Affairs**

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Troops from the Wisconsin National Guard transferred their base security mission during a March 15 ceremony here.

Soldiers of the 1157th Transportation Company, 15th Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade relinquished overall responsibilities for the base security task force to the 410th Quartermaster Company, 15th BTB. One of the first "WagonMaster" units to undertake the force protection mission in Oct. 2006, the new duties came as a change for troops trained as drivers and fuelers.

Lt. Col. Victoriano Garcia, commander, 15th BTB thanked the Soldiers for their hard work, dedication to the force protection mission and setting the standard for base security. A team from Multi-National Forces-Iraq rated the 1157th TC as the best during a recent force protection assessment visit.

"Adjustment from fuel to force protection back to fuel has been easy," said Maj. Tim Skelton, 1157th TC commander. "It's a strange feeling, but it's good to be back doing [transportation]. It was a lot of fun doing the force protection mission."

Skelton was something of a "ringer" for

Lt. Col. Garcia when he formed the task force. The Oshkosh, Wis. native served as a base defense battle captain with the 82nd Airborne Division in Afghanistan from 2002 to 2003.

In addition to climbing down from guard towers and back behind the wheels of their M1088 tractor trucks, the 1157th TC assumes new responsibilities under a new battalion. Now part of the 867th Corps Support Battalion, 15th SB, Skelton and his Soldiers will hit the roads of Iraq to push fuel to support surge operations in Multi-National Division-Baghdad.

"We've got a 100 percent increase to our operational capabilities," said Maj. Kevin Garner, executive officer for the 867th CSB.

Before the transfer, the 867th CSB did not have the assets or equipment to deliver large amounts of "go-juice" outside the wire.

As the influx of combat forces to MND-B continues, Garner sees the addition of the Wisconsin troops as a critical component to mission success. The 1157th's TC fleet of 5000-gallon fuel tankers allows for rapid transport and sustainment to more than 25,000 troops conducting security operations.

"We've maintained proficiency with our [fuel transport] job skills while doing our force protection mission," said Skelton, "In case something like this happened."

## Baghdad in Brief

### Top Sadr City civic leader injured in attack

BAGHDAD - Raheem Al Darraji, a top Sadr City civic leader, survived an attack March 16, when gunmen fired on the vehicle he was traveling in, wounding Al Darraji and killing two others in the vehicle.

One of the men killed, Col. Mohamed Al Farajee, was Sadr City's director of operations for Sadr City. The other man killed was the vehicle driver.

Al Darraji was reported to be in good condition at a coalition medical facility.

After the attack occurred, Al Darraji was transported by members of the Iraqi National Police to the Sadr City Joint Security Station, where he received initial medical treatment. He was then evacuated.

Al Darraji has played an instrumental in the negotiations prior to coalition forces going into Sadr City.

### MND-B Soldiers evacuate two Iraqi women

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Multi-National Division Baghdad Soldiers medically evacuated two Iraqi women from a mortar impact site March 15 north of Dayrat ar Rih, Iraq.

After responding to reports of mortar fire, Soldiers from Troop B, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment discovered two women who were severely wounded in the attack. The women were taken to 28th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad, where they were treated for their wounds.

Soon after the women were hospitalized for care, 2-5 Cav commander Lt. Col. Kurt Pinkerton led a combat patrol to escort the victims' families to the hospital.

# A few words from Multi-National Forces- Iraq commander

## Note

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responsibilities to them.

Operation Fardh al Qanoon - the Iraqi name for the operation to improve security in Baghdad - is in its early stages. Success will take months, not days or weeks, and there undoubtedly are many tough days ahead. Nonetheless, because of your hard work with out Iraqi partners, some encouraging signs are already emerging: sectarian murders are down and sectarian displacement appears to have slowed or even stopped, with increasing numbers of families returning to their homes. It already appears that the Joint Security Stations and Combat Outposts you are establishing are making their presence felt and helping restore a sense of hope to the Iraqi people, block-by-block.

Your efforts will provide Iraqi leaders an opportunity to resolve the serious political challenges they confront, reconcile their sectarian issues, and forge the way ahead for the new Iraq - thereby giving all Iraqi citizens a stake in their new country. From my vantage point, I believe the Iraqi political leadership is committed to moving in the right direction, despite being pulled in different directions by various political parties, sectarian influences, and ethnic pressures. They are realistic, however, and they recognize, as we do, that resolving the many challenges facing Iraq will not be easy.

Beyond that, although most Iraqis want a future of peace, opportunity, and increasing prosperity, there clearly are some individuals and groups with whom the Government of Iraq will not be able to reconcile - soulless thugs who violently reject the goals of the new Iraq.



(Photo by Spc. Davis Pridgen 2-2 Inf. Public Affairs)

**Gen. David Petraeus, commanding general of Multi-National Force - Iraq, talks to local vendors while visiting the Al-Jedidah market in New Baghdad March 11. Petraeus visited the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division area of operation stopping to see the market and the joint security station in Karadah.**

They will not be won over by Iraqi political action: rather, there appears to be no alternative to Iraqi and Coalition Forces bringing them to justice so that they cannot inflict further barbarism on the Iraqi people.

The environment in Iraq is the most challenging that I have seen in over 32 years of service. Indeed, few Soldiers have ever had to contend with the reality of an enemy willing to blow himself up for his twisted cause. In view of that, as you conduct your daily operations, remember that you have every right to protect yourself, even as you attempt to prevent situations from escalating without good reason.

I also want you to be aware of my recognition that our focus on securing the population means that many of you will live in the neighborhoods you're securing.

That is, in fact, the right way to secure the population - and it means that you will, in some cases, operate in more austere conditions than you did before we adjusted our mission and focus. Rest assured that we will do everything we can to support you as we implement the plans. This approach is necessary, because we can't commute to the fight in counterinsurgency operations; rather, we have to live with the population we are securing. As you carry out the new approach, I also count on each of you to embrace the warrior-builder-diplomat spirit as we grapple with the demands that securing the population and helping it rebuild will require.

Tom Brokaw spent some

time with the unit I was privileged to command in Iraq a few years ago and, after seeing all that our troopers were doing, he said to me: "You Know, General, the World War II generation may have been 'the Greatest Generation,' but the Soldiers I've seen today surely must be 'the new Greatest Generation'." I agreed with him then, and I agree with him even more now. You should, in short, be quietly proud not just of what you're doing and how you're doing it, but also of the individuals on your left and right with whom you're privileged to serve.

Thanks for the sacrifices that you and your families are making.

**David H. Petraeus**  
General, United States Army  
Commanding



# Max Impact comes to front lines to entertain

By Spc. Courtney Marulli  
2-2 Inf. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - Days during a deployment can begin to run together, but Soldiers were rocked out of their monotony March 9.

The Air Force Band's rock group, Max Impact, entertained 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division members with cover songs from a variety of genres. Band members even had Soldiers sing a song or two.

Staff Sgt. Rachel Cruz, non-commissioned officer in charge of human intelligence with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, enjoyed the show and then became a part of it, as did Sgt. Kendra Lee, interpreter manager for the brigade. They were serenaded during a cover of Justin Timberlake's *Senorita* and came onstage for an impromptu performance.

Cruz, of Toledo, Ohio, was impressed with the talents the band showcased.

"It's not only their singing and voices but how they dedicated songs to us," she said.

Lee, of Champaign, Ill., said she didn't know what to expect, but that the concert was a welcome break.

"It made me forget about work for a while and that is very rare," she said.

The concert featured songs from artists such as U2, Metallica, Tobey Keith, The Black-Eyed Peas, Janis Joplin, and Lynard Skynard.

The array of music is designed to give all listeners something they like to hear, band members said. As long as the audience is entertained, Max Impact members know they are



(Photo by Spc. Courtney Marulli 2-2 Inf. Public Affairs)

**Air Force Master Sgt. Ryan Carson brings a smile to Staff Sgt. Rachel Cruz (center) and Sgt. Kendra Lee, both of HHC, 2nd Inf. BCT, during a performance March 9 at FOB Loyalty.**

doing their job well.

Master Sgt. Ryan Carson of Rapid City, S.D., is the male vocalist for the group and has been a singer since childhood. He said it's the band's job to bring a piece of home to the deployed troops.

During the performance, Carson serenaded Cruz and Lee and even stood on the seats to engage his audience. Carson explained this is a way to show the audiences its importance to the band.

Max Impact sometimes entertains Soldiers who are stuck in jobs where they can't come to the shows, or who are recovering from wounds.

"We play right by their hospital bed," Carson said.

Master Sgt. Regina Coonrod, of Sparta, Tenn., provides the female vocals for the group. Coonrod started out her military career as a security forces member, the equivalent to the Army's Military Police. After three years she tried out for

Topson Blue, the Air Force equivalent of the Army Soldier Show and then toured for a year. She has been with Max Impact for four years.

"There are so many things I love about performing, being able to share the gift I've been given" she said.

Senior Master Sgt. Rob Henley, the NCOIC and keyboardist, said it's the group's duty and pleasure to ensure the troops understand they are not forgotten. The dedication of bringing a moment of fun to troops goes beyond branch boundaries and is a military thing.

Henley, from El Paso, Texas, said he enjoys music, which has always been a part of his life. "It's a universal language," he said. "You can play for troops who don't speak English and still reach them."

Tech. Sgt. Nate Lavy of Sandusky, Ohio has played drums since he was a child. He grew up in a musical household,

as his father was a band director.

"I don't know if I can quantify it into words," he said of music. "It's a way to communicate with people without words."

Chief Master Sgt. Larry MacTaggart, who will become the career field manager for the Air Force Band on May 1, has been in military for 22 years and was a prior Air Force Band regional member at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb. Besides playing the drums, he writes and arranges music. The Pea Ridge, Ark., resident started playing music in the seventh grade, relatively late compared to the others. But he kept at it and taught music on his own before joining the Air Force.

Master Sgt. Dave Graves, the tour manager for Max Impact, said music is an international language and one that has the capacity to break down barriers of religious, ethnic and other natures. As Graves put it, "It's the most common denominator."